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## THE PENALTIES OF A WELL-KNOWN NAME.

BY OUIDA.

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WHEN in childhood, if we be made of the stuff which dreams ambitious dreams, we see the allegorical figure of Fame blowing her long trumpet down the billowy clouds, we think how delightful and glorious it must be to have a name which echoes from that golden clarion. Nothing seems to us worth the having, except a share in that echoing windy blast. To be famous : it is the vision of all poetic youth, of all ambitious energies, of all struggling and unrecognized talent. To be picked out by the capricious goddess and lifted up from the crowd to sit beside her on her throne of cloud, seems to the fancy of youth the loftiest and loveliest of destinies.

In truth, celebrity has its pleasant side. To possess a name which is an open sesame wherever it is pronounced is not only agreeable, but is often useful. It opens doors easily, whether they be of palaces or of railway stations ; it saves you from arrest if you be sketching fortifications ; it obtains *kudos* for you from every one, from ministers to inn-keepers ; in a word, it marks you as something out of the common, not lightly to be meddled with, or neglected with impunity. It has its practical uses and its daily advantages, if it have also this prosaic drawback, that, like other conspicuous personages, you pay fifty per cent. dearer than ordinary people for everything which you consume. "No-body would sell a wretched ambassador a cauliflower for two pence !" said a friend of mine, who is an ambassador himself, standing before the stalls of a foreign market place where this useful vegetable was being sold at four sous apiece. But he forgot that before the cauliflower could appear on his own table it would have to dress itself up with many condiments and become a choice dish with a long name, and he forgot also the old true saying, *il faut souffrir pour être beau*.

Fame, like position, has its ugly side ; whatever phase of it be taken, whatever celebrity, notoriety, distinction, or fashion, it

brings its own penalties with it, and it may be that these penalties underweigh its pleasures.

The most cruel of its penalties is the loss of privacy which it entails ; the difficulty which it raises to the enjoyment of free and unobserved movement. Whether the owner of a well-known name desire privacy for the rest of solitude, for the indulgence of some affection of which it is desired that the world shall know nothing, for the sake of repose and ease, or for the pursuit of some especial study, the *incognito* sighed for is almost always impossible to obtain.

Find the most retired and obscure of places, amidst hills where no foot but the herdsman's treads, and pastures which feel no step but those of the cattle, a mountain or forest nook which you fondly believe none but yourself and one other know of as existing on the face of the globe ; yet brief will be your and your companion's enjoyment of it if your life or one of your lives be famous ; the press will track you like a sleuth-hound, and all your precautions will be made as naught, and, indifferent to the harm they do or the misery they create, the Paul Pry's of broad-sheets will let in the glare of day upon your dusky, mossy dell.

The artist has, no doubt, in this much for which to blame himself : why does the dramatist deign to bow from his box ? why does the composer salute his audience ? why does the painter have shows at his studio ? why does the great writer tell his confidences to the newspaper hack ?

Because they are afraid of creating the enmity and the unpopularity which would be engendered by their refusal. Behind this vulgar, intrusive espionage and examination there lies the whole force of the malignity of petty natures and inferior minds — i. e., two thirds of the world. The greater is afraid of the lesser : the giant fears the sling or the stone of the pigmy ; he is alone, and the pigmies are multitudinous as the drops in the sea.

We give away the magic belt which makes us invisible, without knowing in the least all that we give away with it : all that delightful independence and repose which are the portion of the *humblés de la terre*, who, all the same, do not value it, do not appreciate it ; do not, indeed, ever cease from dissatisfaction at it. In their ignorance they think how glorious it must be to stand in the white blaze of the electric light of celebrity ; how enviable and delightful it surely is to move forever in a buzz of

wondering voices and a dust of rolling chariots, never to stir unchronicled and never to act uncommented. Hardly can one persuade them of the treasure which they possess in their own obscurity? If we tell them of it, they think we laugh at them or lie.

Privacy is the necessity of good and great art, as it is the corollary of dignity and decorum in life. But it is bought with a price; it is bought by incurring the dislike and vindictiveness of all who are checked in their petty malice and prying curiosity and are sent away from closed doors.

The ideal literary life is that of Michelet; the ideal artistic life is that of Corot. Imagine the one leaving the song of the birds and the sound of the seas to squabble at a Copyright Congress, or the other leaving his green trees and his shining waters to pour out the secrets with which nature had intrusted him in the ear of a newspaper reporter! If a correspondent of the press had hidden behind an elder-bush on a grassy path at Shottery, methinks Shakespeare would have chucked him into the nearest ditch; and if a stenographer had inquired of Dante what meats had tasted so bitter to him at Can Grande's table, beyond a doubt the meddler would have learned the coldness and the length of a Florentine rapier. But then none of these men was occupied with his own personality, none of them had the restless uneasiness, the morbid fear, which besets the modern hero lest, if his contemporaries do not prate of him, generations to come will know naught of him.

Then, alas! oftentimes, the fox, with his pen and ink hidden under his fur, creeps in, wearing the harmless skin of a familiar house-dog, and the unhappy hare or pullet, who has received, caressed, and fed him without suspicion, sees too late an account of his good nature and of his habitation travestied and sent flying on a news-sheet to the four quarters of the globe. Against treachery of this kind there is no protection possible. All that can be done is to be very slow in giving or allowing introductions; very wary in making new acquaintances, and wholly indifferent to the odium incurred by being called exclusive.

Interrogation is always ill-bred; and an intrusion that takes the form of a prolonged interrogation is an intrusion so intolerable that any rudeness whatever is justifiable in its repression.

The man of genius gives his work, his creation, his *alter ego*, to the world, whether it be in political policy, in literary com-

position, in music, sculpture, painting, or statuary. This the world has full right to judge, to examine, to applaud, or to condemn ; but beyond this, into the pale of his private life it has no possible title to entry. It is said in the common jargon of criticism that without knowing the habits, temperament, physique, and position of the artist, it is impossible to correctly judge his creation. It is, on the contrary, a hindrance to the unbiassed judgment of any works to be already prejudicial *per* or *contra* by knowledge of the accidents and attributes of those who have produced them. It is a morbid appetite, as well as a vulgar taste, that makes the public invade the privacy of those who lead, instruct, or adorn their century, and these last have themselves to thank, in a great measure, for the pests which they have let loose.

Every day any one who bears a name in any way celebrated receives requests or questions from persons who are unknown to him, demanding his views on everything from Buddhism to blacking, and inquiring into every detail of his existence, from his personal affections to his favorite dish at dinner. If he deign to answer them, he is as silly as the senders.

Sometimes you will hear that a town has been named after you in America, or Australia, or Africa, with the addendum of the inevitable *ville* attached to your name : it is usually a few planks laid down in a barren plain, and you are expected to be grateful that your patronymic will be shouted on a siding as the railway train rushes by it. Sometimes an enthusiastic and unknown letter writer will implore you to tell him or her "everything" about yourself, from your birth onwards ; and if, as you will certainly do if you be in your senses, you consign the impudent appeal to the waste-paper basket, your undesired correspondent will probably fill up the *lacuna* from his or her own imagination. Were all this the offspring of genuine admiration, it might be in a measure excused, though it would always be ill-bred, noxious, and odious. But it is either an impertinent curiosity or a desire to make money.

The moment that your name is well known, the demands made upon you will be as numerous as they will be imperative. Though you may never have given any permission or any data for a biography, the fact will not prevent hundreds of biographies appearing about you : that they are fictitious and unauthorized matters nothing either to those who publish or to those who

read. Descriptions, often wholly inaccurate, of your habits, your tastes, your appearance, your manner of life, will be put in circulation, no matter how offensive or how injurious to you they may be. Your opinions will be demanded by strangers whose only object is to obtain for themselves some information which they can turn to profit. From the frequency or rarity of your dreams to the length of your menu at dinner, nothing will escape the insatiable appetite of an unwholesome and injurious inquisitiveness. Obscure nonentities called Stubbs, or Stadge, or Briggs, or Bragg, will imagine that they honor you by writing that they have baptized their brats in your name, and requesting some present or acknowledgment in return for their unwelcome effrontery in taking you as an eponymus.

It is probable, nay, I think, certain, that in no epoch of the world's history was prominence in any art or any career ever rendered so extremely uncomfortable as in ours, never so heavily handicapped with the observation and penalty-weight of inquisitive misrepresentation. All the indications of the age tend to increase a thousandfold all that minute examination of and impudent interference with others which were alive in the race in the days of Miltiades and Socrates, but which has now, in its so-called scientific toys, the means of gratifying this mischievous propensity in an infinitely greater and more dangerous degree.

The instant that any man or woman accomplishes anything which is in any way remarkable, the curiosity of the public is roused and fastens on his or her private life to the neglect and detriment of his or her creations. The composer of the "*Cavalleria Rusticana*," an opera which, whatever may or may not be its artistic merit, has had charm and melody enough to run like a flame of fire across Italy during the past summer, awakening the applause of the whole nation, has dwelt in obscurity and poverty up to the moment when his work arouses a fury of delight in his country people. Lo! the press immediately seizes on every detail of his hard, laborious life, and makes a jest of his long hair. What has his life or his hair to do with the score of the "*Cavalleria Rusticana*?" What has the fact that he has written limpid and bewitching music, which has the secret of rousing the enthusiasm of the populace, to do with the private circumstances, habits, or preferences of his daily existence? It is an in-

tolerable impudence which can presume to pry into the latter because the former has revealed in him that magic gift of inspiration which makes him momentarily master of the souls of others.

The human mind is too quickly colored, too easily disturbed, for it to be possible to shake off all alien bias and reflected hues; and it is more just to the dead than to the living, because it is not by the dead moved either to that envy or detraction, that favor or adulation, which it unconsciously imbibes from all it hears and knows of the living.

Whoever else may deem that the phonograph, the telephone, and the photographic apparatus are beneficial to the world, every man and woman who has a name of celebrity in that world must curse them with deadliest hatred. Life is either a miserable and weak submission to their demands, or a perpetual and exhausting struggle against and conflict with their pretensions, in the course of which warfare enemies are made inevitably and continually by the tens of thousands. He who bends beneath the decrees of the sovereign spy is popular at the price of dignity and peace. Those who refuse to so stoop are marked out for abuse and calumny from all those who live by or are diverted by the results of the espionage. There is no middle way between the two; you must be the obedient slave or the irreconcilable opponent of all the numerous and varied forms of public inquiry and personal interference. The walls of Varzin have never been high enough to keep out the interviewer, and the trees of Faringford have never been so thickly planted that they availed to screen the study of the poet. The little, through these means and methods, have found out that they can annoy, harass, torment, and turn to profit, the great. Who that knows humanity could hope that the former would abstain from the exercise of such power?

In early youth we know not what we do, we cannot measure all we part with in seeking the publicity which accompanies success; we do not realize that the long trumpet of our goddess Fame will mercilessly blow away our dearest secrets to the ears of all, and so strain and magnify them that they will be no more recognized by us, though become the toy of all. We do not appreciate, until we have lost it, the delightful unregarded peace with which the obscure of this world can love, hate, caress, curse, move, sit still, be sick, be sorry, be gay or glad, bear their children, bury their dead, unnoted, untormented, unobserved.

The worst result of the literary clamor for these arrays of facts, or presumed facts, is that the ordinary multitude, who have not the talent of the original seekers, imitate the latter, and deem it of more importance to know what any famous person eats, drinks, and wears, in what way he sins, and in what manner he sorrows, than it does to rightly measure and value his picture, his position, his romance, or his poem. Journalistic inquisitiveness has begotten an unwholesome appetite, an impudent curiosity, in the world, which leaves those conspicuous in it neither peace nor privacy.

The press throughout the whole world feeds this appetite, and the victims, either from timidity or vanity, do not do what they might do to condemn and resist it. The interviewer too often finds his impertinent intrusion unresented for him, or the public which employs him, to reach any consciousness of his intolerable effrontery. He has behind him those many-handed powers of anathema and misrepresentation and depreciation which are called the fourth estate, and almost all celebrity is afraid of provoking the reprisals in print which would follow on a proper and peremptory ejection of the unsought visitor.

Because a man or woman more gifted than the common multitude bestows upon the world some poem or romance, some picture, statue, or musical composition, of excellence and beauty, by what possible right can the world pry into his or her privacy and discuss his or her fortunes and character? The work belongs to the public, the creator of the work does not. The invasion of private life and character never was so great or so general as it is in the last years of this century. It is born of two despicable parents, curiosity and malignity. Beneath all the flattery, which too frequently covers with flowers the snake of inquisitiveness, the snake's hiss of envy may be plainly heard by those who have ears to hear. It is the hope to find, sometime, some flaw, some moral or physical disease, some lesion of brain or decay of fortune, in the private life of those whom they profess to admire or adore, which brings the interviewer crawling to the threshold and peering through the keyhole. What rapture for those who cannot write anything more worthy than a newspaper paragraph, to discover that the author of "*Salammbô*" was an epileptic! What consolation for those who cannot string rhymes together at a child's party to stand beside the bedside of Heine and watch "the pale Jew writhe and sweat!"



In Dalou's monument to Eugene Delacroix he represents the great painter with his chin sunk in the *cache-nez*, which his chilly and fragile organization led to his uncovering generally, no matter whether the weather was fine or foul. Dalou has outraged art, but he has delighted his contemporaries and crystallized their taste; the *cache-nez* about the throat of the man of genius enchants the common herd, which catches cold perpetually, but could not paint an inch of canvas or a foot of fresco, and feels jealously, restlessly, malignantly, grudgingly, that the creator of the "Entrée des Croisés" and the "Barque da Dante," so far above them in all else, is brought nearer to them by that folded foulard. The statue in the gardens of the Luxembourg is an epitome of the sentiment to the eye; time, glory, and art bend before Delacroix and offer him the palms of immortality; Apollo throws his lyre away in sympathy and ecstasy; but what the mortal crowds see and applaud is the disfiguring neckerchief!

It is the habit of scholars to lament that so little is known of the private life of Shakespeare. It is, rather, most fortunate that we know so little, and that little but vaguely. What can we want to know more than the plays tell us? Why should we desire to have records which, drawing earthwards the man, might draw us also downwards from that high empyrean of thought where we can dwell through the magic of the poet's incantations?

It may be a natural instinct which leads the crowd to crave and seek personal details of the lives of those who are greater than their fellows, but it is an instinct to be discouraged and repressed by all who care for the dignity of art. The cry of the realists for *documents humains* is a phase of it; and results from the poverty of imagination in those who require such documents as the scaffolding of their creations. The supreme gift of the true artist is a rapidity of perception and comprehension which is totally unlike the slow piecemeal observations of others. As the musician reads the page of a score at a glance, as the author comprehends the essence of a book by a flash of intelligence, as the painter sees at a glance the points and lines and hues of a landscape, whilst the ordinary man plods through the musical composition note by note, the book page by page, the landscape detail by detail, so the true artist, whether poet, painter, or dramatist, sees human nature,

penetrating its disguises and embracing all its force and weakness by that insight which is within him. The catalogues, the classifications, the microscopic examinations, which are required to make up these "*documents*," are required by those who have not that instantaneous comprehension which is the supreme gift of all supreme talent. The man who takes his notebook and enumerates in it the vegetables, the fish, the game, of the markets, missing no bruise on a peach, no feather in a bird, no stain on the slab where the perch and trout lie dying, will make a painstaking inventory, but he will not see the whole scene as Teniers or Callot saw it. When the true poet or artist takes up in his hand a single garden pear or russet apple, he will behold, through its suggestions, as in a sorcerer's mirror, a whole smiling land of orchard and of meadow; he will smell the sweet scent of ripe fruit and wet leaves; he will tread a thousand grassy ways and wade in a thousand rippling streams; he will hear the matin's bell and the even song, the lowing kine and the bleating flocks; he will think in a second of time of the trees which were in blossom when Drake and Raleigh sailed, and the fields which were green when the Tudor and Valois met, and the sunsets of long, long ago when Picardy was fierce in war and all over the Norman lands the bowmen tramped and the fair knights rode.

The phrasing of modern metaphysics calls this faculty assimilation; in other days it has been called imagination: be its name what it will, it is the one essential and especial possession of the poetic mind, which makes it travel over space and annihilate time and behold the endless life of innumerable forests as suggested to it by a single green leaf. When the writer, therefore, asks clamorously for folios on folios of *documents humains*, he proves that he has not this faculty, and that he is making an inventory of human qualities and vices rather than a portrait of them.

OUIDA.